



## Gifted for Love (Part 4) – A Supernatural Community and a Personal Word

Matt Chandler – July 15, 2018

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If you have your Bibles, let's go to 1 Corinthians 15. If you're with us for the first time in a while this morning, this is the fourth week in a six-week series on 1 Corinthians 12-14. We've been talking about how God has gifted all of the children of God with some manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

We argued in the first week that everyone who's a Christian has been gifted by the Holy Spirit with a gift that is to be used for the building up of the body, and if you are a Christian spectator you are not actually stepping into what God has designed you for, what God has saved you for, and what God has put into you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

All of us need to reject what I called in the first week the "LeBron James rule" and, instead, everybody play their part so it's not just these men and women we look at, like we can look at Jen Wilkin and go, "Man! What an unbelievable gift of teaching. I can't do that, so I must not be able to do anything." We can't afford to do that.

In the eyes and heart of God, the one who practices hospitality and administration is every bit as needed and necessary for the flourishing of the body as a teacher like Jen Wilkin or a leader like Josh Patterson or on and on and on I could go. So that was the first week: everybody has a gift. I just wanted to press gently and say if you're bored in your Christian faith it might have something to do with you being a spectator rather than a participant.

Nobody wants to read about a game all the time and not actually play the game. So many of us are guilty of thinking, "I'm not as gifted as *this* person or *that* person, so there's probably no space for me," and we rob ourselves of God supernaturally using us in ways that would blow our minds if we would just surrender to it. Practice hospitality. Use your gift of administration. Do the work of an evangelist. On and on I could go.

Then I headed out for my two weeks, and I thought Trevor Joy did an incredible job. I'm still not quite sure how he preaches sermons in 27 minutes. Don't expect that today. I'm back. But he does. In fact, last week there was a song in the middle of the sermon. It was still 30 minutes. That's like a devotional; that's not a sermon. Anyway, this one is going longer because of that.

I loved how Trevor worded it. He said 1 Corinthians 12 is about pulling all of us, as God's instruments, unique in design and contribution, onto the same sheet of music. I loved that. Then last week he said chapter 13 is how love is the music of heaven we make together in the here and now. I just loved his verbiage. Now, I know some of you have been really eager for 1 Corinthians 14 and others of you have been really nervous about 1 Corinthians 14. Regardless, here we go.

Let me tell you exactly where I'm headed. Here's what I want to do today. I'm going to do it in probably 42 minutes. I want to show from the Bible and church history (in the church history part a bunch of names that unless you're a theological nerd you might not have ever heard of) that the church of Jesus has always been a supernatural community. Always. It is more odd when she is not than when she is. I want to show you that, and then I want to get into what prophecy is and what prophecy isn't and how to step into it as the children of God.

Andrew Wilson essentially said, "The early church was a charismatic community. Of that there can be no doubt. From the day of Pentecost onward, the book of Acts is a story of Holy Spirit breakthrough, speaking in other languages, prophesying, healing, casting out demons, angelic encounters, miraculous prison breaks, visions, dreams, evangelistic preaching, buildings shaking, the dead being supernaturally brought to life and, on occasion, the living being supernaturally brought to death, boldness in the face of persecution, joy, and even one story of teleportation."

I think what happens in the book of Acts, because of our experiences, is we read the book of Acts and look at our own lives, and we're like, "Gosh! That's not what things look like at *my* house, at *my* church." So then you go, "Okay, is the book of Acts descriptive or prescriptive? Maybe it's just a history book. Maybe it's just telling us what happened, not what should be happening." That's one of the ways some people deal with the book of Acts.

I think, though, what you can't look past is that when the apostle Paul is writing to the churches and when James, the half-brother of Jesus, writes to the churches, they assume the churches are experiencing miraculous manifestations of God's power via the Holy Spirit. They always assume it. Let me show you this.

Romans 12:6 (Romans isn't a book known to be loved by the mystics) says, "**Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith...**" It's weird that he starts this list with the prophetic, but we'll define that in a bit. First Corinthians... We're right in the middle of 1 Corinthians. We're reading about all sorts of crazy things. Ephesians 5:18: "**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...**"

Let's chat for a second. When the Bible talks about being *filled* with the Holy Spirit or being *drenched* in the Holy Spirit or being *immersed* in the Holy Spirit, it's not talking about salvation. To be a Christian is to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit is inside of you. I don't believe there's a second baptism.

There is salvation, and then what happens is the Spirit of God, like a temperature gauge or a volume gauge, will all of a sudden bang up to 10 and then maybe back down to a 2 or 3 and then back up to 10 or back down to a 5, and the filling of or the drenched in or this language that's happening in the New Testament is not that all of a sudden you get the Spirit in a way you haven't had it but the Spirit begins to manifest in a way you haven't experienced in the normalcy of Monday and Tuesday.

I want to be careful that when we say, "Don't be drunk with wine because it leads to debauchery, but rather be drunk in the Spirit," we don't start believing that in order to be real Christians there has to be some second mystical baptism, because that's not true. Galatians 3:5: "**Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...**"

It's just a sentence. Paul doesn't feel the need to address *why* miracles or *what* miracles, but he just assumes there are miracles happening in Galatia. He doesn't say, "Does that thing that happened two years ago with Jill happen because you're doing good or because God is good?" He just says, "Does God do miracles [plural] among you? Is that happening because you're a good person or because God is a good God?"

First Thessalonians 5:19-21 (I picked this one out on purpose): "**Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies...**" I picked it because of verse 21. "**...but test everything; hold fast what is good.**" First Timothy 1:18. I'll be fair. First Timothy might be cheating, and here's what I mean by

that. Timothy is actually an elder in Ephesus, and we already quoted Ephesus as a place that supernatural activity is going on, so maybe this is cheating, but at least I'm letting you know.

First Timothy 1:18: **"This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare..."** This is a fascinating text, if you want to dive in and dig around here. Timothy is jammed up. Ephesus is going through some things that are not ultimately good, and we know this because if you read in Revelation, chapter 2, they're neither hot nor cold. God is really struggling with Ephesus. "Get in or get out."

How does Paul encourage Timothy? With a prophetic word that was spoken over him by his grandmother. Don't forget that. That prophetic word... He's not quoting Jeremiah 29:11 to him. He's reminding him of a prophetic word that was given to him via his grandmammy, and it emboldens him.

Then James 5:14-15: **"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."** There is an assumption in the biblical writers that the church of Jesus Christ is experiencing, at least in some regularity, miraculous, Holy Spirit stuff. They don't ever try to take a deep dive and defend this position.

They're just saying, "Does God do miracles among you? Remember that prophetic word?" It just seems to be normal. Then, bouncing off of this... We could do more texts. I'm limited in time and scope here. Here's what might just happen to you. If we're thinking this way, then there's a confrontation that has to take place. The confrontation is...*If this is New Testament Christianity, then why are we not seeing what seems to be normal there?* Does that question haunt anyone else? It haunts me. It haunts your pastor.

What happens when you're confronted by this is you have to do some things with it. One of the things that becomes the easiest thing to do is to just say something like, "Well, all this was just a sign given to the apostles so they could validate the Word of God, and then once the Word of God was written we no longer need these things."

That's actually a theological framework called *cessationism*. It's there, I think, because not textually but experientially we don't see it and we have to do something with that, because *we* can't be the problem. Something must have gone wrong, because we've memorized the book of Jeremiah and two of the four gospels.

It's a good idea, but it doesn't work. Remember my first argument. The church of Jesus has always been a supernatural community. John the Apostle was the last apostle to die, and for the next 500 years the early church fathers, the Patristics, testify the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in the local church. You might not care about these names. They're huge names when it dealt with early heresies in the church.

Justin Martyr, AD 160: "For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us." I love the word of warning. "And just as there were false prophets contemporaneous with your holy prophets, so are there now many false teachers amongst us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware..." There will always be false prophets. Always. That is why we have the Book. More on that in a moment.

This is Tertullian of Carthage. This is AD 208. I'm putting these dates on for a reason. I'm trying to head-on clash with the idea that all this miraculous stuff ceased when John the Apostle died, and then we didn't have anything until Azusa Street and the breakout of the Holy Ghost in California millennia later.

Tertullian of Carthage, AD 208: "Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come and have made manifest the secrets of the heart..." This was a big heresy in this century. Basically, Marcion (it would come to be known as *Marcionism*) would say the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the New Testament.

Although Marcion would say Jesus is the Savior of the world and Paul his chief apostle, he would say the God of the Old Testament is a lesser God and not the God you and I worship as Christians. This lie still permeates to this day, where people try to unhitch the Old Testament from the New Testament. It can't be done.

It was deemed a heresy early on by the patristic fathers, and this is Tertullian's confrontation of Marcion. He's basically saying, "Show me the power. If you're right, show me the power." He's saying, "Hey, can you produce, like we can so easily, those who can see into the future, those who can expose the workings of the heart?"

"...let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer—only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him; let him show to me also that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from amongst those specially holy sisters of his.

Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty, and they agree, too, with the rules and the dispensations and the instructions of the Creator..." He's referencing the Bible there. Tertullian is going, "Show me the power in accordance with the Word of God. It's easily coming from *my* side of things. Let him show us such things if he be a man of God."

Then Origen of Alexandria, AD 248. "We have to say, moreover, that the gospel has a demonstration of its own, more divine than any established by Grecian dialectics. And this diviner method is called by the apostle the 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power': of 'the Spirit' on account of the prophecies, which are sufficient to produce faith in anyone who reads them, especially in those things which relate to Christ; and of 'power,' because of the signs and wonders which we must believe to have been performed, both on many other grounds and on this, that traces of them are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the precepts of the gospel."

I love his argument. He's saying, "Do you want to know who sees this stuff still? Those whose whole life is consumed by the precepts of the gospel. Do you know who walks in the miracles? Those who are fully abiding in the presence and power of Jesus. That's who."

Then if you're like, "Oh man, please quote Basil the Great," okay, okay. Basil the Great says, "Through the rebirth from above...the Spirit enlightens all, inspires prophets, gives wisdom to lawmakers, consecrates priests, empowers kings, perfects the just, exalts the prudent, is active in gifts of healing, gives life to the dead, frees those in bondage, turns foreigners into adopted sons."

Then I'll go with my ancient friend Augustine, who is not considered to be a mystic by anyone, whose book *City of God* devotes an entire chapter where Augustine is indignant at the idea that God was not miraculously moving among his church. He would argue that he had personally witnessed

an extraordinary range of healings, from blindness to breast cancer to gout to paralysis to hernia to demonization and even death.

I thought about trying to put all this on a map for you and put a timeline up there so you could see that across 500 years, to the far east of the empire, the far west of the empire, the far north of the empire, and south of the Mediterranean, the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit and the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit is working among the people of God.

He seems to be working not among just elite super-Christians but everyday common folk. What's amazing to note about all of these patristic fathers is they're not saying *they* did it. They're saying they *saw* it. Tertullian is not going, "I drove out a demon." He's like, "Wow! Demons were driven out as we gathered." He's not saying, "I prayed for a guy and he was healed."

Augustine is not saying, "I healed a blind man." He's saying, "A blind man was healed." By who? Don't have his name. Isn't that awesome? Like, Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, Northern Africa, a swan of a man of God. "I saw it." This seems to be normal Christianity. So what are we to make of this? I'm glad you asked, because that leads me into the second part of the sermon. First Corinthians 14, starting in verse 1:

**"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.**

**The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."**

Now just for expectation's sake, I don't plan on tackling or talking about tongues at all today. That's all next week. I'm not tackling prophecy *and* tongues all in the same weekend. We would need a mind diaper. It would go badly. We're just going to tackle prophecy today. Good? Tongues is all next week. Okay, here's what I want you to see.

The first thing is that the pursuit of all of these gifts (we're coming out of 1 Corinthians 13, which is the Love Chapter) is to pursue love. What's the motivation? To love. How does that work? Where do we get that love? We are recipients of that love. That love begins to transform us, and then overflows out of us in an extension of the love we have experienced in the forgiveness and presence of God in Christ in us. The motivation of the gifts is always love.

Now, will God gift those whose motive *isn't* love? Yes, he will, which is why this stuff gets really, really confusing. Why would God use a man or woman who is clearly in it for their own self-exaltation? Do you know why? Because it's about God and not about that person, and God will do what God will do. People's egomaniacal narcissism doesn't stand in the way of God flexing his Godness.

This is one of the biggest "What in the world, Lord?" when God powerfully and profoundly uses people that it seems clear to us, whether we're judgmental or not, are either in it for money or fame and not walking humbly before the Lord. That's where things get really confusing for us, but it shows we still believe in a merit system rather than a grace system. I hate that. Oh, I hate it, but it's there. It's good.

Let's talk about this. The gift of prophecy is given to the church, according to this text, to build up, to encourage, and to console. So let's talk about what prophecy is and what prophecy isn't. The "Thus saith the Lord" is over. When this text is talking about prophecy, it's not talking about the way Jeremiah or Isaiah prophesied. That's closed. That's canonized. You will never prophesy in a way that's on par, equal to, anywhere near the inerrant, infallible Word of God. That's closed, shut.

The best you have is the humility to say, "I think the Lord would have me lay this before you." Even then, only in so much as it would encourage and build up. Look at me. God will never give you a prophetic word for your stingy, selfish sister about how God is going to destroy her if she doesn't repent. That's not how prophecy works, but that's how selfish people use it, isn't it? "I had a dream about you last night. In that dream you were apologizing to everyone for being the two-faced liar you might be. I don't know. It was a dream." That's not what this is.

Three times in the last year I've taught on rule of life. Here's what I mean by *rule of life*. It's that slowing down and creating space so we might hear from the Lord and commune with him. I think the first step into supernatural, Holy Spirit presence and power in the life of a church, in the life of a

believer involves slowing down and asking the Lord to speak. When this thing says, "Pursue love so you might build up, console, and encourage," it's tapping into a reality all of us have experienced.

The sheer volume of heartbreak, loneliness, despair, sickness, confusion, and brokenness is so immense among us and around us that when it comes to light it's overwhelming. When we have our Encounter nights and we pray for the sick... There are people all around you who are suffering in silence. Their marriages are difficult. They've been sick for a decade, and they can't get out of it.

On top of that, you have all of the questions that tend to haunt us just because we're humans...questions like, "Am I loved? Am I wanted? Is God as disappointed in me as I am in me? Has he forgotten me? Does he see me?" As much as we'd like to put on our Jesus cape, we ask these questions. These questions haunt us.

I want to keep coming back to this. The Bible answers every one of those questions. "Am I loved?" The Bible has something to say about that. God hasn't left me hanging. God hasn't left me in a desperate need for somebody to get a word from the Lord and come to me. No, he has given me the Book, and the Book answers the question. "Does God love me? Has he forgotten me? Is he for me? Is he disappointed in me?" I go to Romans 8.

"Who can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Can angels? Can demons? Can famine? Can persecution? Can nakedness? Can sword? No! In all these things we are more than conquerors in Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us." There's the Book, and the Book has something to say, yet what this text is teaching is that there are times that God and the Holy Spirit through men and women takes the truth of the Word and personalizes it.

I'll use an illustration to help, and then I want to talk about this on the ground. About three weeks (maybe a little bit longer than that) before I had my seizure that revealed my brain tumor, I got a call from a charismatic pastor here in town. We knew each other. We weren't good friends or anything, but he called and was like, "Hey, man, I need to meet with you, Matt. It's going to be weird. I feel like the Lord has given me a word. Maybe it's a word. I just don't know.

I've tried to forget about it. I journaled it. I was praying, and the Lord kind of put you on my mind. I asked him, 'Okay, what is it with that?' and I wrote it all out. Then I was like, 'No, he's going to think I'm crazy. I'm not doing that.' Then I had a dream, and in the dream the Lord was like, 'You'd better tell him that word.' So then I went to my elders because I thought maybe my elders would give me

an out." He was like, "Here's the word, and here's what I feel like the Lord is wanting me to tell Matt Chandler." They were like, "You call that man." So he called me.

So a guy named Chris Chavez , who was my assistant for a long time, and I go down to Olive Garden in Lewisville. We sit across from this man and one of his elders, and here's what he says to me.

"Man, you're going to need to pray through this. You're going to need to figure out what this is.

Here's all I know. I feel like the Lord has shown me that he's going to circumcise you, and through that circumcision he's going to make you the father of many sons." I'm like, "Okay. Well, that's too late. Too late." (Wait. I need a ruling. Is that over the line? I need an elder. The non-elders are like, "You're fine." I don't think we have one in this service, so that means I'm safe either way. Great.)

So I write this down, and here's what I'm thinking. We were at 3,000 pushing into 4,000, and that had happened in five years, so we were needing to make some structural changes, but I knew if we made the changes we were trying to make there were going to be two or three ministers here who would not like those changes, would get frustrated, and maybe leave.

I don't know how you see me, but my personality type is a Harmonizing Persister, which means I want everybody to get along, but I know that's not going to happen, so I'm always internally conflicted. Sometimes I wish I was an Achiever Persister, who's like, "This has to get done; let's do it," but I'm not. I would probably be really mean if I was, so I'm kind of glad I'm not.

Anyway, in the middle of all of that, I think, "Oh my gosh. God has heard our prayers. We're supposed to make these changes. We're going to lose these brothers, and God is going to raise up more sons because we were obedient to make this hard call." I was geeked up. I came back to the elders like, "Okay, guys. This is going to sound weird. I got this random call and went down to Olive Garden in Lewisville, and here's what he said. I think this is confirmation that we're to make these changes." They were like, "Okay, let's make these changes."

Then three weeks later I had a seizure that revealed a tumor in my right frontal lobe. I had that cut out, and then probably seven or eight months later I'm lying on our bathroom floor... If you've been through chemo or anything like that, there's something about that cold tile floor that's a gift from God in heaven.

I'm lying on that floor like, "Oh, thank you." Then if it got warm... "Oh, thank you," hoping it was over. You throw up until there's nothing more to throw up, and then you throw up some more, and you don't even know what's in there. I would talk like, "What *is* this? There's nothing in me."

While I'm lying there, I remember that word. "I will circumcise you [cut your head], and through that I will make you the father of many sons." If you know the story of The Village and the trajectory of the ministry God has given me, that started right after that. So I got geeked up and called him. I was like, "Oh my gosh, bro! I think that word has to do with *this*."

He was like, "Yeah. What? You're just now figuring that out? When I heard what happened to you, I was like, 'Praise God.'" He had this personal worship revival just because he had a word and trusted the Lord. Then he heard... "Oh, he had brain surgery. Yeah!" He was excited that he had heard from the Lord and had given me this word. He thought I was going to be encouraged by it, and I thought it had to do with organizational structure.

Here's how we've defined *prophecy*. There might be some debate around this. This is JT English, Kyle Worley, and myself. When we're talking about prophecy, this is what we think the Bible is talking about. *Prophecy consists of Spirit-prompted, spontaneous, intelligible messages orally delivered to a person or community intended for edification or encouragement.* This is what we think the Bible means when it talks about prophecy.

We receive from the Lord a word that doesn't contradict the Scriptures, doesn't stand in contrast to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, but it personalizes the Scriptures. On the bathroom floor that afternoon, the God of creation bent down and kissed my forehead in the darkest night of my life. That's not demonic. That's the other thing. "Well, the Devil can make things confusing." It was not confusing in that moment. It was a beautiful gift of God just to remind me, "I see you. I have not forgotten you. I am in this."

Not "You will survive. You will be healed." That's not what he said. "I'm going to use it, and I'm with you, and I see you." I knew Bible verses for all of that, but I felt seen and loved that day. So if this is for edification, consolation, building up, then it involves quieting our hearts, asking God to speak, and then acting on that.

When I pray with the staff at 7:30 on Sunday mornings... Staff and all key volunteers are here. It's not a game. Here's what we do. I'll just say, "Hey, let's take a few minutes, quiet our own hearts,

kind of do a check-in on yourself. Are you angry today? Are you rustled today? Is there anything you need to lay at the feet of Jesus?"

We do that, and then we move into asking the Holy Spirit to bring someone to our minds, *anyone*. We just pray, "Bring someone into my mind who I might encourage, who I might build up, who I might console today." When the Spirit does that and we get a picture in our heads, then we begin to ask, "How might I encourage them?" When we get some clarity on that... Sometimes I see no one, and that's okay. We didn't fail. We're just saying, "I'm listening. What would you have your servant do?"

When we've gotten that person's face, we ask what the Lord wants us to do. Sometimes the Lord speaks to his people in pictures that don't make a lot of sense, and sometimes you have to step out in trust and just go, "Hey, this might sound crazy, but this is what the Lord put on my heart as I prayed for you."

Lauren and I, on the first Encounter night we did... We were praying for the sick, and a woman walked up to us and shared with us that she had had some significant physical issues that had lasted a long, long time. What had happened was the shingles virus had really done some damage. Lauren sees in vivid pictures in a way that makes me jealous. I'm like, "Come on, Lord. Give *me* some of that." He's like, "You just hush and preach," and then does these really cool things through Lauren.

So she's explaining this to us, and we're kind of quieting, asking, "Okay, Lord, how shall we pray? How would you want us to encourage this woman?" Lauren goes, "Is it your trigeminal nerve?" I've known that woman since she was 17. She doesn't know anything about any trigeminal nerve. How do you see a trigeminal nerve? What does it look like? You'll have to explain it to me later, baby.

So she says it out loud. This woman looks at her and she has tears in her eyes, and we're like, "Okay, the Ghost is up to something." We just began to pray over her and ask that the Spirit of God would heal her and do something miraculous in her. We asked her, "Is anything happening?" She said, "No."

So we asked again. We prayed boldly. We didn't hedge our bets. "If it might be your will..." or "One day would you..." "When she dies and goes to glory finally will she be set free." All of that's true.

That's not what we were asking for. We wanted it now, and if God wanted to do it he would do it, and if he didn't he wouldn't, but we were going to ask.

She found us the next week and was like... She was totally trying to undersell. It was her husband who was like, "Tell them!" She got to hold her grandbaby for the first time in years. The pain wasn't completely gone, but it had significantly lessened. One of the ways God speaks is through pictures that may or may not make sense to us but be insight into another person in a way that they feel seen, known, loved, and built up.

Now, because we're Bible people, this stuff is scary. Let's have some real talk. *What if we're only talking to ourselves?* What if we're like, "Okay, Lord, will you show me somebody I might encourage?" and somebody pops into our head and that's just us? Look at me. So what? Oh no. You're going to encourage somebody. Why would that be this terrible thing?

Then...*What if we're wrong?* Those are the two big things that haunt Bible people. We're terrified of everything. "What if I get it wrong and they stone me to death?" I already said that's not the kind of prophecy we're making. We hear, and by faith we approach, and if it sounds crazy we've lost nothing. Imagine what would happen if before we gathered on Sunday morning... I know you're like, "Oh please, brother. I'm trying to find shoes and not kill a kid."

But before you came to Home Group, before you went to work, before you went into your next meeting, you just said, "Lord, who might I encourage? Make me aware. Make me mindful. Put me in the room so I can see people, and then give me a word of life for them." Then you walked in faith in that. Can you imagine what might be unleashed?

We're a people who brag about being sarcastic. That's my love language. That's a terrible thing. That's not a great thing. That is not a good brag. "I can really cut people with my words quickly. That's how I let them know I love them." I'm talking to myself right now. What would it be like to be known as someone who always brings life, always speaks life, always calls out what is true?

The kind of power that could be unleashed would blow our minds, and it takes us into other spaces that are good, right, and beautiful. I just don't think you're ever going to offend anybody like this. If they don't understand what's being said, then just let it sit. Maybe in time God will reveal it to them. What I'm asking you to do is be brave. Ask, hear, step out, approach, and just say, "Hey, while I was praying the Lord brought you to my mind..." Even if it sounds crazy to you, just trust him.

Say I'm praying in the morning and I'm like, "Lord, bring me somebody to encourage. I want to be used by you. I want to pursue love. I want to push out darkness. I want to expose the lies of the Enemy, and I want to use my mouth to build up your sons and daughters," and he puts Danny Spencer in my mind.

I don't go, "Well, is that me? Gosh, Danny texted me earlier this week. Is that bad chicken?" No, I'm going, "Okay. Danny. Let's do it. Lord, what would you want me to encourage Danny with?" Then I quiet again. I'm trying to listen, and automatically in my head there's a picture of a pirate ship. There are cannons on the pirate ship, and there's a shark chasing the pirate ship.

At that point you're like, "Nope. No. Not gonna happen." Here's what I want you to do. I want you to just step out. You can even admit... We're growing together, and we're going to fail, and it's going to get weird. It's going to be awesome. I'm just going to go to Danny and be like, "Hey, brother. You heard my sermon. I was praying. Danny, there was a pirate ship. There was a shark chasing it. There were cannons."

I'm not going to interpret that for him. I'm not going to be like, "What I think that means is that maybe you're stealing some stuff from people, and Jesus is the shark, and you need to repent." I'm not going to interpret that for him. In a great deal of humility, I'm going to be like, "Does that make any sense to you?"

It's perfectly okay to go, "That doesn't make any sense at all," but here's what we need to be: "But thank you for being so bold as to step into what the Holy Spirit prompted you to step into. I'm proud of you for even having the courage to do that."

I think the thousands of times a week somebody flashes across your mind or you get some impulse to say this or to encourage this person or reach out there's something divine there going on, and you chalk it up to just stuff flowing through your head. It's not. It's an invitation to play. So take the risk. Here's what's fun about doing it this way. Six thousand of you here in Flower Mound have been given the same challenge this week. Pray. Ask. Listen. Step out in faith.

What might be unleashed if there were 6,000 words of encouragement, building up, and consoling among the body of Christ at The Village Church? Christianity isn't just knowledge *about*; it's relationship *with*. This is what takes that step into operating that way, doing the Word, not just

hearing it. So let's practice as we conclude. Why don't you bow your heads and close your eyes. If you're not a believer and all this is too weird for you, you can just stare at me. I'll stare back, and we'll see what happens.

Here's what I want you to do, the same thing we did this morning at 7:30. I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone to your mind. Just confess to the Lord that you want to be used by him, you want to pursue love, you want to be used to build up his sons and daughters, and ask the Spirit of God to bring somebody to your mind.

You don't have to overthink this or second-guess this. If nobody comes to your mind, you're not a failure. You're fine. Once you have that face that might have just invaded or just been a fleeting thought, I want you to ask the Lord how you might encourage them. It might be a text of Scripture. It might be a picture of something in your head. It might be something else altogether.

Now I want you to set your intent on finding them and sharing this with them. God has not given you a word of judgment. That's not what prophecy is. God has not asked you to expose in someone some shortcoming and failure. That's not what prophecy is. It certainly isn't what it is in *this* text. It's for building up. It's for encouragement. It's for consolation.

I want you to set your intent on getting face-to-face with this person (you can even leverage technology for that), looking them in the face, and saying, "At my church..." or "You know what Matt did. As I was praying, God brought you to my mind. I asked him how I might encourage you, and this is what I felt like the Lord asked me to do. Maybe that sounds crazy or maybe I'm way off, but I want to take a chance at failing here, and I want to start operating this way, where I ask the Lord to use me to speak life into people."

Father, I thank you that we're never alone, that you do not forget us or forsake us or leave us. I thank you that all over this gathering today faces and lives, real people, flashed across our minds, and then you encouraged us with a word that doesn't stand in contrast to your Scriptures, doesn't make your Scriptures insufficient, but actually personalizes them and delivers them like a kiss on the forehead.

I pray we not take ourselves so seriously. I thank you that you are not a weary, tired father who gets angry when his children don't nail it the first time. I pray that you would unleash in our

congregation words of life as the norm. Grow us in these things as we fumble forward. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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